

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2816

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1707

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MARR, XO

SUBJ: CURRENT GSL AND MALDIVIAN POSITIONS ON DIEGO GARCIA

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

REF: STATE 123690

1. SRI LANKA: GSL OFFICIAL POSITION ON DIEGO IS UNFAVORABLE, AS INDICATED IN PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S PERSONAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT NIXON DATED FEBRUARY 11, 1974. IN THAT COMMUNICATION SHE CHARACTERIZED U.S.-UK DIEGO EXPANSION PLANS AS SETBACK TO EFFORTS TO REDUCE INDIAN OCEAN TENSIONS AND CONTRARY TO INCREASINGLY POPULAR INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE (IOPZ) PROPOSAL (COLOMBO 440, FEB. 14. 1974). COMMUNIQUE SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED BY MINISTRY OHOF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MDFA) AND PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER LAKSHMAN JAYAKODY REITERATED GSL DISPLEASURE BUT TONE WAS MODERATE (COLOMBO 504, FEB. 22, 1974). ELABORATION OF U.S.-UK DIEGO EXPANSION PLANS IN MARCH 1974 AND PRESIDENT FORD'S AUGUST 1974 STATEMENT SUPPORTING CONFIDENTIAL

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THESE PLANS PROMPTED NO OFFICIAL PUBLIC GSL

REACTION (COLOMBO 677, MARCH 14, 1974; COLOJMBO 2505, SEPTEMBER 5, 1974). JAYAKODY IN RESPONSE TO PRESS CONFERENCE QUESTION DECEMBER 10, 1974 CRITICIZED CENTO MIDLINK EXERCISE, LINKED IT INDIRECTLY TO DIEGO EXPANSION, AND DECLARED GSL HAD OFFICIALLY PROTESTED U.S. EXPANSION PLANS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT NO COMMUNICATION HAD BEEN SENT SINCE PRIME MINISLR-PRESIDENT NIXON CORRESPONDENCE OF FEBRUARY 1974 (COLOMBO 3431, DECEMBER 11, 1974). SRI LANKA WAS ONE OF FEW LITTORAL STATES TO REFRAIN FROM NEGATIVE COMMENT ON DIEGO IN LATE 1974 AND EARLY 1975 (COLOMBO 112, JAN. 10, 1975).

2. PRIVATE AUTHORIATIVE GSL POSITION HAS CONSISTENTLY SHOWN SENSITIVITY TO U.S. POSITION TO EXTENT THAT CRITICISM HAS BEEN MILDER THAN GSL DOMESTIC POLITICAL RHETORIC. STRENGTH OF TROTSKYITE, COMMUNIST, AND OTHER LEFT-WING INFLUENCE IN UNITED FRONT COALITION AND SOME PRESSURE FROM USSR AND INDIA DEMAND PERIODIC GSL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ITS OPPOSITION TO DIEGO, ESPECAILLY THROUGH DOMESTIC PRESS (COLOMBO 3136, NOV. 8, 1974). BUT PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADING MDFA OFFICIALS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFLECTED RATHER ACCOMMODATING TONE. PRIME MINISTER STATED SHE WAS DOWNPLAYING ISSUE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ON OCCASION OF PROTEST TO NIXON IN FEBRUARY 1974 (COLOMBO 465, FEB. 15, 1974). TISSA WIJAYERATNE, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MDFA, INFORMED UK HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DECEMBER 1974 THAT U.S.-UK DECISION TO PROCEED WITH DIEGO DEVELOPMENT WAS "RATHER EXPECTED" AND HE INDICATED MORE CONCERN ABOUT UK PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL FROM GAN (COLOMBO 3371, DEC. 5, 1974).

3. DESPITE GSL RELATIVE RETICENCE, OFFICIAL POSITION REMAINS OPPOSED TO DIEGO AND EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS AGAINST ANY ALLUSION TO GSL'S PRIVATE HANDLING OF ISSUE. PRIME MINISTER'S MODERATION UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS HER APPRECIATION OF U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND PERHAPS ALSO DESIRE THAT IN WAKE OF INDOCHINA DEVELOPMENTS UNITED STATES

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SHOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY USEFUL ROLE AS COUNTERWEIGHT IN REGION TO USSR, PRC AND INDIA (COLOMBO 1668, MAY 23). UNFORTUNATELY, DOMESTIC LEFT-WING IDEOLOGICAL PRSSURES MAY BE REINFORCED DURING COMING YEAR BY BUILD-UP FOR NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT SCHEDULED COLOMBO IN AUGUST 1976, AND PRIME MINISTER'S EFFORTS TO KEEP DIEGO GARCIA ON BACK BURNER MAY BECOME

MORE DIFFICULT. IN PREPARATION FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, THEREFORE, PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER OF PROTEST TO PRESIDENT NIXON SHOULD STAND AS CURRENT OFFICIAL GSL POSITION, BUT SINCE LETTER WAS PRIVATE, DIRECT REFERENCE SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

4. MALDIVES: GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES (GOM) ATTENTION HAS FOCUSED RECENTLY ON WAYS TO PREVENT UK WIND-UP OF GAN INSTALLATION IN 1976 FROM HAVING ADVERSE EFFECT ON MALDIVIAN ECONOMY. ON OCCASION OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER GANDHI'S VISIT TO MALDIVES IN JANUARY, GOM REPORTEDLY TOOK INITIATIVE IN RAISING ISSUE OF IOPZ PROPOSAL

IN EXPRESSING SUPPORT (COLOMBO 0906). DIEGO WAS NOT RAISED DIRECTLY NOR TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAS IT BEEN SINCE.

VAN HOLLEN

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